Moderators' Report/ Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2016

GCE Music Technology (6MT02)

ALWAYS LEARNING PEARSON

General Issues

As always, candidates who had a substantial knowledge of both musical and technological topics, along with the appropriate vocabularies, were the most successful. Candidates were generally well-prepared by centres for both special focus styles.

There were very few incomplete papers this year, indicating good time management and exam technique. However, as has been the case in the past, candidates sometimes answered a question from a past paper, with which they have quite rightly been prepared, rather than reading and absorbing the question on the current paper and applying their listening and analytical skills to the track in question.

Additional sheets continue to be used, despite the instruction to only write in the space provided. Most candidates gave vague and generic responses on the additional sheets, often having already scored the maximum marks in the space provided. Notes and workings out should *not* be submitted. Use of additional sheets also results in a slowing down of the scanning/marking process.

Candidates are reminded that answers need to be specific. General responses such as 'use of FX', 'delay' or 'reverb' will rarely attract a mark; 'the vocal has been flanged', 'timed delay with high feedback' and 'there is a high reverb level' are much more specific responses.

It simply cannot be stressed enough that clear and legible handwriting is extremely important, as marks will most certainly be lost if examiners are unable to read the answer. This also applies to staff notation questions.

Specific questions

1(a) Most popular answers were the use of synths, the gated reverb on the snare, electronic drums, and the high reverb level. There were very few references to specific 80's-style EQ on guitar, kick and snare. There were some vague responses regarding compression and chorus.

1(b) Responses were split between those that answered the question, and those that referred to reverb, delay, flange, and other processes that were not functions on a synth.

1(d) This was generally well-answered. However, some candidates referred to duplicating samples on two tracks and panning them left and right. In the first place, this would result in mono and secondly, it does not reflect 80's technology. Many candidates referred to stereo micing.

1(e) Generally well-answered by the majority of candidates.

2(b) The majority of responses were correct, with some instances of reversed headphones, and a small, but not insignificant, amount of candidates placing the bass centre, which is where you would *expect* to hear it rather than where it was.

2(c) Candidates who read the question correctly often scored well, with an understanding of the main elements of the process. However, a large proportion of candidates referred to the term 'bouncing' as used in the realm

of digital technology, or described multiple tape recorders rather than multiple tracks.

2(d) Simple answers such as 'syncopated', 'off-beat' and 'rhythmic unison' were the best solution for candidates. When they began to try and describe note values, or descriptions of starting off slow and getting faster, the answers became confused. Many references to 'staccato' and 'syllabic'.

2(e) This was fairly well handled by the majority of candidates, who identified the type of reverb, the high reverb level and the opposite panning. There were some vague answers describing the effect of the reverb ('it sounds all washy'), rather than using the correct terminology to describe the reverb itself.

3(b) Candidates who mentioned, or implied, a *difference* in panning, use of FX, EQ etc accrued marks. Those who simply stated 'FX' or 'EQ' were not being specific enough for a mark. An answer such as 'the guitars have been panned' needs qualification; where have they been panned to?

3(d) This was well-answered by the majority of candidates. There were some references to bongos, congas, glockenspiels (possibly in mistake for the flexatone) and tambourines.

3(e) There were many responses such as, 'it starts off thin, and gets thicker.' More specificity was required for this listening task. The contrast between polyphony and homophony was a popular answer. Many candidates inverted the textures and described intro as sparse and the verse as polyphonic. Some candidates mentioned dynamics, which is not a textural device.

4(a) Generally well-answered by candidates with a solid grounding in technology. Others gave vague answers such as 'the sound', 'the tone', and wrong answers such as 'the pitch'. 'Frequency' was a common ambiguous answer.

4(b) This corresponds with 4(a). Many answers from candidates with less understanding of technology came up with descriptive responses such as 'it sounds wobbly', 'it's an underwater sound', rather than the technical terms the question required.

4(c) Many candidates scored on the first two notes, with others picking up one or two of the other marks. It is clear that a significant number of candidates have not mastered staff notation. Credit was given wherever possible for notes which were badly written.

4(d)(i) Again, those candidates with a secure understanding of technology scored well. A great many candidates referred to frequency rather than SPL/volume/amplitude.

4(d)(ii) Many candidates scored 2 marks on the distance and the positioning of the mic facing the bell. Some candidates threw away a mark by identifying the type of mic, which was not asked for in the question.

5(b)(i)/(ii) Candidates often relied on their knowledge of punk and new wave *in general*, rather than applying their listening skills to this particular track. For example, compared to most new wave recordings, the production on this

track is not particularly polished. Those who listened and analysed scored higher marks. The second part was not as well answered as the first, with many candidates referring to female vocals.

5(c) This elicited a wide range of answers. These responses included 'distortion', 'delay', reverb', 'compression', and so forth. 'Flange' and 'Phaser' were also popular incorrect answers. Some candidates took the word 'modulation' to mean the musical sense, and referred to a change of key or tonality.

5(e)(i) Many candidates described (sometimes incorrectly) ADT. Those who understood the process of manual double tracking often scored full marks, describing two separate tracks/same performer/same material.

5(e)(ii) Many responses were correct, but some were in reverse, claiming it couldn't be ADT as the vocals were identical. Some claimed that ADT had not been invented.

5(f) Some candidates suffered from lack of technological vocabulary, and offered rather vague descriptions, particularly of the threshold, where they often referred to frequency rather than amplitude. Some candidates discussed the settings in the recording, but failed to answer the question. There were, however, many extremely good responses.

5(g) Again, this suffered from some vague descriptions at times, but the majority of responses included turning up the gain and using a pedal. A significant amount of candidates talked about adding FX using plugins and a DAW, when the question requires a solution for the period in which the track was recorded.

5(h) Ramones won by a very sizeable margin over The Jam in terms of candidates' choice. The Ramones question was generally well-answered, even though there were some confusions as to whether they were a UK band, or an influence on UK bands. References to the members change of name, and their wearing of leather jackets were common. The responses for The Jam generally scored less, either as a result of irrelevant information ('they wore suits'), or general descriptions of punk as a whole, some of which do not apply to this band.

6(a) The decreasing cut-off was most frequently identified, along with the resonance. The type of filter was often incorrectly identified, with candidates confusing LPF with HPF.

6(d) There was a very mixed response to this question. Many identified EQ, but failed to be specific as to which frequencies were boosted. Reverb and delay were often mentioned, but without any qualification. Some candidates identified volume automation.

6(e) This required careful listening, and some candidates scored well. Others referred to dynamics rather than texture, or were vague in their description of changing/additional timbres or instruments. The mark scheme requires specificity.

6(f) The majority of candidates mentioned ‘autotune’, ‘pitch correction’ and ‘vocoder’. The rest gave vague answers about reverb, delay and doubling the vocal.

6(h) Most candidates fared well, but some failed to state the obvious, such as ‘multiple repeats’, ‘timed delay’ and ‘fades out’.

6(i) This was split fairly evenly between acid and grime. Answers commonly included indicative bpm, use of technology, production values (for both), equipment (for acid, with the 303, 808 and 909), lyrical content and influences (for grime). There were a significant number of answers that referred, in the case of acid, to raves and drug-taking and, in the case of grime, to specific artists or tracks, neither of which was asked for in the question.